merely a deed of youthful folly, implying no great criminality; or palliating circumstances are discovered to lessen, or excuse its guilt. Has the person been indulging evil temper or violent passion?—he at length brings himself to believe that this was highly proper, when, as he now perceives, so much malice was intended. His cunning he will dignify with the name of wisdom, selfishness is called prudence, and his profligacy, the becoming enjoyment of the pleasures of this world.

The will exercises an equally prejudicial influence when men look to their *present* character. The view which we get of an object depends on the position which we take: thus every man sees his own rainbow and his own aurora borealis. From the position at which he views himself, man gets a delusive view of his own character. He imagines that he possesses good qualities, which, as all neutral persons know, do not belong to him; and is unconscious of infirmities of which all his friends are cognizant. He never doubts of his own fortitude and firmness, at the very time that all others fear that he will shrink in the hour of trial. He imagines that he is generous when others know that he is selfish. It would be laughable, were it not rather pitiable, to see him so self-deluded, while others are so fully aware of his weaknesses.

The heart yet further deceives us when we would look to our *future* intentions. It seduces us in this way, when it fails in every other. Even when mankind have been constrained to discover that they have acted improperly in time past, they cherish the belief that they may wipe out the stain by their future exertions. In particular, they are apt to imagine, that they can perform any deed on* their forming a momentary resolution to do so. The young man fancies that he can keep his character pure in the midst of abounding corruption, and attain to any excellence which for the time he may resolve to

reach. He wonders to sec individuals farther advanced in life so sunk in criminality. He thinks not that in his future life he may descend, step by step, the same dark path of vice, till he becomes the subject of similar wonder. And yet other men will not profit by his fall, any more than he profited by that of others; for every one imagines that he has some peculiar charm by which he can resist all the enchantments of vice, and come forth unhurt from its dangerous presence.